

***Stictopleurus abutilon* (Rossi) and *S. punctatonervosus* (Goeze) (Het.: Rhopalidae): New records mainly from Essex**

The two British *Stictopleurus* species are rhopalid bugs with a largely transparent and un-punctured base to the forewings. They are dark brown or yellow-brown with pale spots around the abdomen, and a broad almost spoon-shaped tip to the scutellum, especially in *S. abutilon*. In Shirt (1987. *British Red Data Books: 2. Insects*. NCC) there are no post-1900 records given for Britain for either *Stictopleurus abutilon* or *S. punctatonervosus* and they were both listed as Appendix species (believed extinct). They were also considered Extinct in Kirby (1992. *A review of the scarce and threatened Hemiptera of Great Britain*. JNCC, Peterborough) who states that there are confirmed old records for *S. abutilon* from Deal in East Kent, Ashstead in Surrey, Bournemouth in South Hampshire and Hurn in Dorset. There was no strong evidence that the species was ever established in Britain, although the existence of three specimens from Bournemouth suggests the possibility that a population was at least temporarily established. There are confirmed records of *S. punctatonervosus* for Charlwood in Surrey and Holm Bush in West Sussex, but none later than 1870. It was apparently established at the Charlwood locality, having been taken there in 1860, 1869 and 1870 (Kirby *op. cit.*). An Essex record, made near Chelmsford in June 1950 by J. H. Flint, was based on a misidentification for *Rhopalus subrufus* (Kirby 1997. Essex Heteroptera report for 1996. *Essex Naturalist* (New series) **14**: 18-20).

*S. punctatonervosus* was rediscovered in Britain by Jerry Bowdrey (1999. *Ent. Rec.* **111**: 135-136) in 1997 when he collected a specimen whilst vacuum sampling dry, sparsely-vegetated ground for invertebrates at The Moors, Colchester (OS grid reference TM 0124) on 17 July 1997. On 23 September 1997, a second example was taken at West Bergholt Heath (TL 9527) from bare, sandy ground. A third *Stictopleurus* taken at West Mersea (TM 0012) on 30 July 1998 has now re-determined by Dr Bowdrey as *S. abutilon* (pers. comm.). All these sites are in North Essex (Vice County 19).

Richard Jones (2000. *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus* (Goeze, 1778) (Hem.: Rhopalidae) breeding in Middlesex. *Ent. Rec.* **112**: 267-268) swept two specimens of *S. punctatonervosus* from the flowery area of rough grassland on the embankment of the River Thames next to Chelsea Power Station on 8 August 2000. He realised that he had earlier taken two specimens from Woodlands Farm, Bexley, swept in a derelict farm building site on 7 July and 20 August 1998, and one specimen taken with *S. abutilon* at West Acton on 5 October 1999, swept on a rough grassy embankment.

Kirby (1997. *op. cit.*) records *S. abutilon* new to Essex on the basis of one collected at the Essex Filter Beds (TQ 361867) by D. J. P. Miller at MV light on 14 August 1996. He notes that the species has recently been recorded from several locations in the south of England, and appears to have established breeding populations in the relatively mild climate of recent years.

I first collected both species in 2000 — *S. punctatonervosus* from tall open flower-rich herbaceous vegetation at the side of railway sidings in Haringey, Middlesex

**Table 1.** New records of *Stictopleurus punctatonervosus*

Date	Site	Vice county	O. S. Grid reference	Quantity	Collector
8 July 1998	Bexley	16	TL 5172	1	C. W. Plant
30 June-12 July 2000	Haringey, railway sidings	21	TQ 3090	3	P.R. Harvey
21 September 2000	Colchester, The Moors	19	TM 0124	1	J.P. Bowdrey
13 August 2001	Pitsea Untidy Industries	18	TQ 7387	2	P.R. Harvey
23 August 2001	Pitsea Untidy Industries	18	TQ 7387	1	P.R. Harvey
5 July 2001	Colchester, Mason Way, Osilid Works	19	TL 997263	1	P.R. Harvey
1 August 2001	Kennett	26	TL 690688	1	P.R. Harvey
26 July 2001	Isle of Dogs	21	TQ 372798	2	P.R. Harvey
26 September 2001	Colchester, Mason Way, Osilid Works	19	TL 998262	3	J.P. Bowdrey
18 July 2002	Red Lodge	26	TL 6970	1	P.R. Harvey
25 October 2002	Abbey Road, Barking probably <i>punctatonervosus</i>	18	TQ 442833	1 nymph	P.R. Harvey
28 May 2003	Cuxton Pit	16	TQ 722679	1	P.R. Harvey
16 June 2003	Former Royal Ordnance site	18	TQ 3798	1	P.R. Harvey
28 June 2003	West Thurrock PFA lagoons (north)	18	TQ 5877	3	P.R. Harvey
07 July 2003	Orsett Camp (Springfields) Sand Pit	18	TQ 661809	2	P.R. Harvey
09 July 2003	Sandon Pits	18	TL 7404	1	P.R. Harvey
18 July 2003	Former Royal Ordnance site	18	TQ 3798	1	P.R. Harvey
20 August 2003	Anchor Field	18	TQ 591779	3	P.R. Harvey
22 August 2003	Queens Park, Billericay: grassland	18	TQ 6796	1	P.R. Harvey
26 August 2003	Cuxton Pit	16	TQ 722679	3	P.R. Harvey
11 September 2003	Belmont Road allotment site, Grays	18	TQ 605780	2	P.R. Harvey
13 September 2003	Swanscombe Peninsula	16	TQ 6076	1	C. W. Plant
15 September 2003	Medway Valley Park	16	TQ 7367	1	P.R. Harvey
21 September 2003	Headcorn, River Beult	15	TQ 8244	2	P.R. Harvey
21 September 2003	Dering Wood	15	TQ 8944	2	P.R. Harvey
26 September 2003	Canvey Northwick	18	TQ 768833	1	P.R. Harvey
18 October 2003	Cornard Mere	26	TL 890388	3	P.R. Harvey
21 October 2003	Stratford Marsh	18	TQ 377841	4	P.R. Harvey
29 October 2003	Stanway, Holly Road (indoors)	19	TL 955237	1	N. Cuming

**Table 2.** New records of *Stictopleurus abutilon*

Date	Site	Vice county	O. S. Grid reference	Quantity	Collector
30 July 1998 (redet.)	West Mersea, St Peters Well	19	TM 0012	1	J.P. Bowdrey
11 August 2000	Broom Hill, West Tilbury	18	TQ 6577	1	P.R. Harvey
10 August 2001	Colchester, Middlewick Ranges	19	TM 0125	1	J.P. Bowdrey
20 August 2002	Hornchurch Country Park,	18	TQ 5384	1	P.R. Harvey
10 July 2003	Tilbury Environmental centre site	18	TQ 657759	1	P.R. Harvey
15 August 2003	Orsett Camp (Springfields) Sand Pit	18	TQ 661809	1	P.R. Harvey
18 August 2003	Former Royal Ordnance site	18	TQ 3798	1	P.R. Harvey

between 30 June and 12 July and *S. abutilon* from Broom Hill near West Tilbury in South Essex on 11 August, probably swept in similar habitat. Subsequently both species have turned up many more times, especially *S. punctatonervosus* (see Tables 1 and 2), from several vice counties including East and West Kent, Middlesex, West Suffolk, as well as North and South Essex.

If my own experience is anything to go by, then *S. abutilon* is currently much scarcer than *S. punctatonervosus*. My own records also suggest that *S. punctatonervosus* is now likely to be found in almost any dry open herbaceous or ‘wasteground’-type habitat in Suffolk, Essex, Middlesex and Kent. The species was found at practically every Essex site surveyed in 2003, including a generally species-poor rough grassland public open space adjacent to an allotment site in Grays. During a field meeting in Kent, ostensibly looking for spiders, on 21 September, the species was swept from open herbaceous vegetation in two out of the three localities visited, in one case in what appeared to be a set-aside field adjacent to the River Beult. On a spider meeting to Cornard Mere in West Suffolk on 18 October we had sat down for lunch in a set aside field adjacent to the Mere. I casually commented to the others that I had been finding *S. punctatonervosus* in lots of places this year, wherever the habitat contained areas of open tall herbaceous vegetation, and said, “I’ll just go and have a sweep to see if it turns up again”. A few minutes later, I had three specimens from the area near where we were seated!

It seems probable *S. punctatonervosus* is now frequent in much of south-eastern England wherever there is suitable open habitat, and it. It is worth noting though that many sites containing the species have been good quality dry grassland or brownfield invertebrate localities rather than set aside.

I am grateful to Dr Peter Kirby for identifying or confirming the identity of most of my *Stictopleurus* specimens, and to Jerry Bowdrey, Nigel Cuming and Colin Plant for permission to include their records in this note.— PETER HARVEY, 32 Lodge Lane, Grays, Essex RM16 2YP.